

## General Studies – 2; Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian Diaspora.

### The Indian Diaspora

#### 1) Introduction

- “Diaspora” is an omnibus phrase which brackets people of Indian origin who have emigrated since the 19th century to all corners of the world.
- They spread the Indian Culture and traditions abroad benefitting India in general and send back remittances back home helping the foreign exchange reserves in particular.
- Over 30 million overseas Indians are living throughout the globe. They are contributing in their countries and also participating in Indian development.
- India has the world's largest Diaspora, according to figures from the United Nations

#### 2) Significance and Contribution

- They serve as an important 'bridge' to access knowledge, expertise, resources and markets for the development of the country of origin with the rest of the world.
- Indian Diaspora is an important part of India's “soft diplomacy”. For example, Indian Diaspora played a critical role in the fructification of Indo-US Nuclear deal.
- They have also contributed to the growth and development of the country of their residence. For example, Silicon Valley represents the success of Indians.
- The Indian Diaspora has played an important role in the field of Science & Technology.
- They are a significant source of trade and investment in India.
- Source of large inflows of remittances, which has been helping balance the current account. According to the World Bank Indian Diaspora is going to be the largest earner of remittances in the world in next few years.

#### 3) Government Initiatives

- The government has started, since 2003, the Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas, to mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community to the development of India.
- Merger of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs with the Ministry of External Affairs
- India also allowed visitors from 43 countries, including the United States, Australia and Fiji, to receive visas upon arrival, replacing the previous process, which took weeks
- The Overseas India Facilitation Centre was set-up by the Government of India in partnership with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), to facilitate economic engagement of overseas Indians with India.
- The government evacuated Indian Diaspora in Yemen in 2015 through the Operation Rahat and from South Sudan through Operation Sankat Mochan.
- The government is emphasising more on youth and has started a scheme "Know your country".
- "Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana" targeting Indian youth seeking overseas employment.
- The Indian government is active on the social media and the government provides quick response and solves the problems of Indian Diaspora through the social media.

#### 4) Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2017

- The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is a Convention organized to connect the Government of India and State Governments of India to its Overseas Indian Diaspora.
- PBD 2017 focused on the theme "Redefining the engagement with the Indian Diaspora"

- Strengthen Diaspora engagement and provide a platform for networking with the Diaspora.
- Recognize the Diaspora's contribution to India and know their expectations and concerns.
- Deepen engagement with young Diasporas, to help them know more about their roots.

### 5) Issues faced by Indian Diaspora

- **West Asia**
  - a) Low oil prices owing to Shale gas boom and slower global growth is resulting in job cuts for Indians.
  - b) Rising instability due to Shia - Sunni conflicts and radical Islamism is a direct threat to security of Indians.
  - c) Fierce competition from skilled labour from Philippines and cheap labour from Nepal.
  - d) Regressive and medieval policies like employer seizing the travel documents upon arrival known as Kafala labour system is exploitative.
- **US, Canada & UK**
  - a) Discriminative practices owing to a racist, colonial mindset still persists. This makes it difficult to secure jobs and work visas.
  - b) stricter H1B visa norms in the US congress
  - c) president-elect Donald Trump's call to channel more jobs to Americans
  - d) Revision of visa norms in UK post Brexit might hit the Indian Diaspora hard, specially the IT professionals
  - e) Disparity in jobs and racial abuse of Sikh and Muslim community due to terrorist branding
  - f) Cultural integration due to various eating preferences (beef eating), consumerism and nuclear society
- **Dual Citizenship**
  - a) Majority of Indian Diaspora want to retain their Indian citizenship along with the citizenship of the country of their residence.

### 6) Way Forward

- To ensure that Diaspora members feel welcomed on their arrival in India, easier procedures for immigration and customs clearances that are marked by courteous service are essential.
- **Address the problems of our overseas blue-collar workers**
  - a) Negotiating a Standard Labour Export Agreements with the host countries
  - b) Monitoring and supervision of our overseas workers by our Missions
  - c) compulsory insurance schemes covering the risks faced by our overseas workers
- PIOs make frequent visits to their home state or to visit their relatives. There should be greater focus on promoting tourism among 2nd generation PIOs.
- Welfare of Indian Women married to NRIs/PIOs
- **Economic Development**
  - a) Diasporic professionals are working in senior positions in manufacturing industry can be helpful in promoting India as an important destination for out-sourcing.
  - b) Government should also consider setting up Special Economic Zones, exclusively for projects to be set up by NRIs/PIOs.
  - c) The Government should consider issuing special infrastructure bonds for attracting NRI/PIO investments on the lines of the Israel Bonds.
- The challenge before India lies in the way it taps its widespread Diaspora's financial and intellectual capital.